



BLIND SPOT

<http://ontario.indymedia.org/blindspot> — a production of the Kitchener-Waterloo Independent Media Centre

Media Democracy Day

In our era of rapid concentration and commercialization of the mass media, one major convergence remains: interest groups for media democracy.

Media Democracy Day will push for and promote a mass media system that informs and empowers all members of society. Media Democracy Day will connect existing pockets of critical and creative media projects into a coherent message for public attention and local and global actions.

Following the rise of social movements for feminism, racial justice, and environmentalism in recent decades, international efforts to democratize the media are now mobilizing for education, protest and change.

Media Democracy prioritizes diversity over multiplicity, citizen control over consumer choice, cultural development over commodity trading, community presentation over representation, and public discourse over public relations.

October 19, 2001

www.MediaDemocracyDay.org

We want media reform

This citizens' agenda has been abandoned by government policy and conveniently side-stepped by mainstream media. Even though they use public airwaves and mediate democratic discourse, media corporations face few public interest obligations.

Our print, broadcasting and even on-line media products and processes are unable to communicate the broad range of perspectives in our communities because they are addicted to advertising and mainly owned by a handful of national and international corporations. The only audiences these corporations are responsible to are their shareholders and major advertisers.

This movement calls for media reform and renewal not just for democracy, but for a communication system capable of expressing the transformative cultural changes needed for human survival through cooperation and ecological sustainability.

Protest

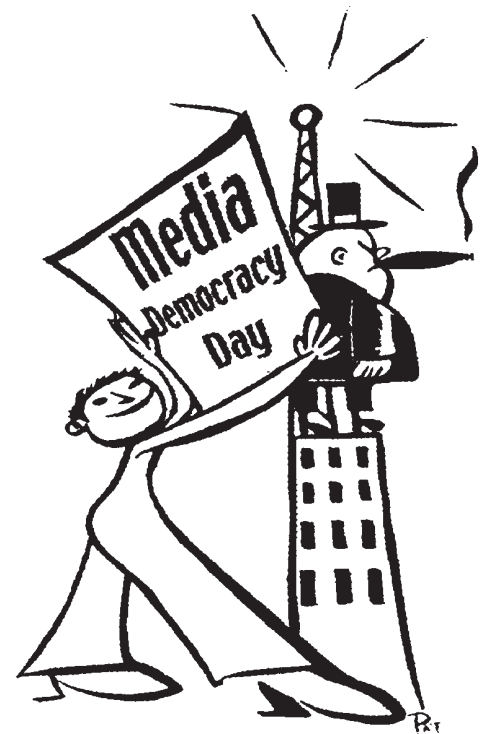
Against a media system based on commercialization and exclusiveness.

Education

Understanding how the media shapes our world, and limits democracy.

Change

Call for a media culture that encourages citizen participation and responds to public interests. Demand diversification of media control, equitable representation and community access.



Why? <from adbusters.org>

For too long, activists have been the trained tiger in the mass-media circus. Told that only the media-savvy make the primetime, we fine-tune our performances and amp up our stunts; in return, we get a few column-inches of ink or a glimpse of our banners on the evening news.

Meanwhile, the gatekeepers let slide a tidal wave of entertainment, advertisement, jingles, journalism and pop analysis that props up consumerism, boosts the "progress" economy, cheerleads corporate culture, cranks up the spectacle, and never fails to remind us that oil company CEOs care about the environment, too.

The mainstream media has rested on its mythical claim "to comfort the afflicted and afflict the comfortable." But it is the comfortable, while the list of the afflicted includes every bench-warmer in consumer democracy's elimination dance: all those troubled by media convergence; any reporter who believes in "change from the inside"; advocates of independent and public journalism; all small presses; every subvertiser; all those with media-violence fatigue; anyone who believes airwaves and bandwidth are a public trust; every activist demanding "the right to communicate"; and each man, woman and child who can't find a damn thing worth watching on the tube.

Online media resources

ALTERNET.ORG

COMMONDREAMS.ORG

COUNTERPUNCH.ORG

GUERRILLANEWS.COM

ONELORLD.NET

RABBLE.CA

ZMAG.ORG

The current state of affairs — reason for hope and despair

From high school teachers, lessons for the press

by Lawrence K. Grossman
from the *Columbia Journalism Review*, www.cjr.org
September / October 2001

In July I played faculty-member-for-a-day at Harvard University's week-long Media and American Democracy Institute for high school teachers. ...

The high school teachers selected each year are an astonishingly lively bunch, interesting, thoughtful, dedicated, outspoken, and exceptionally knowledgeable about the news business. This summer, especially, the teachers in my classes were not shy about letting us know just how dismayed they are at the quality and character of the news they see. They are confused about what is considered journalism. They don't like what they get from most of the press. They resent the dumbing down of local and network television and radio, cable, the Internet, newspapers, and magazines. They

fear the growing concentration of global media companies and relentless focus on the bottom line at the expense of responsible reporting.

Most damning of all, the teachers say the news business gives their students the wrong values, a distorted picture of what's important, and a wholly inadequate view of what's happening in the world. These are teachers of history, social studies, English, and journalism. Many act as faculty advisers to their school newspapers. And they complain that the commercial media make their job harder, if not impossible, by failing to cover serious issues, by focusing on gossip, speculation, and entertainment, and by the descent to what they characterize as sleazy journalism. ...

Ownership and control of the media

with files from www.mediachannel.org and www.presscampaign.org

Worldwide, the media is owned and controlled by a handful of companies. AOL Time Warner, the world's largest media company, owns 12 movie companies, 24 book brands and 29 television operations, including the ultra-influential CNN. Add 35 magazine titles, 52 record labels, and 27 million Internet subscribers to its empire and it becomes clear that the company's influence among consumers, especially those in North America, is unmatched.

The world's second and third largest media companies, Walt Disney and Bertelsmann, own 79 radio and television operations between them. Besides owning over 720 retail stores, Disney also controls 18 online ventures and eight movie companies, including Walt Disney and Touchstone. For its part, Bertelsmann is the world's leading publisher, controlling over 80 magazines and selling over a million books a day in the United States.

In the advertising realm, the

biggest ad company in the world, Viacom, also happens to own several influential television companies including CBS, MTV, and its supposed competitor, VH1. In addition, it publishes over 2,000 books a year, owns 180 radio stations in the U.S. alone, and controls huge companies such as Blockbuster and Paramount.

International news is equally as concentrated, coming to us for the most part through Rupert Murdoch's News Corporation. In addition to owning *The New York Post*, and *The Times* and *The Sun* in the U.K., News Corp. owns over 100 papers in Australia alone.

In Canada, three big chains — CanWest Global, Torstar and Quebecor — controlled 72 per cent of all daily newspaper circulation in 2000. All the dailies in New Brunswick were owned by the Irving family and in Saskatchewan, Prince Edward Island and Newfoundland, all the daily papers were owned by the Southam/Hollinger chain.

check out
indymedia.org
for independent
news from around
the world

The Institute for Media, Peace and Civil Society

www.IMPACS.org

The goal of IMPACS' Free Media Program is to foster free, critical and effective media worldwide, and to enhance the media's role in the process of democratic development, good governance and public sector accountability.

Media and Peacebuilding

Peacebuilding means strengthening the prospects for peace and weakening the chances of renewed violence in war-torn countries. The goal of peacebuilding is to enhance the capacity of a society to manage its own conflicts without violence. Because almost all peacebuilding efforts take place in a highly charged and unstable media environment — where information is often scarce and suspect — there is an early and critical role for the media to play in peacebuilding. If the media can transform itself into an instrument of peacebuilding, its influence can be pervasive and positive.

Can the New York Times count, or quote, peace activists?

from *Fairness & Accuracy in Reporting*, www.fair.org

October 2, 2001

Since the September 11 terrorist attacks, *The New York Times* has downplayed and distorted peace rallies and demonstrations against a military response.

After thousands of anti-war activists gathered in Washington, D.C. on September 29, *The Times* responded with a 10-sentence story, under the headline "Protesters in Washington Urge Peace with Terrorists."

Given that a call for bringing terrorists to justice through non-military means was central to the rallies, the headline is a gross mischaracterization of the protesters' message.

The Times also misreported other basic facts, like the size of the

crowd in Washington. *The Times* estimated that a "few hundred protesters" were on hand, while the official police estimate was 7,000 (*Washington Post*, 9/30/01). One only had to watch the live coverage on C-SPAN to know the *Times* was way off.

The next day, *The Times* ran a slightly longer story about the second day of protests on page B7. The photo that accompanied the story, however, was dominated by a sign held by one of the counter-demonstrators: "Osama thanks fellow cowards for your support."

The rallies held in Washington were not the first time the paper downplayed peace activism. ...

more on this story available at the website